



NOAA *Background*

The Clean Water Action Plan

Implementation of The Clean Water Action Plan (CWAP), announced by President Clinton and Vice President Gore on February 19, 1998, is protecting public health and restoring our nation's precious waterways by setting strong goals and providing states, communities, farmers, and landowners the tools and resources to meet them. It charts a new course emphasizing collaborative strategies built around watersheds and the communities they sustain. For the past year, nine agencies have been working together to carry out the key actions in the Action Plan and assist state and local groups with their watershed work.

A WORD ABOUT NOAA. . .

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) conducts research and gathers data about the global oceans, atmosphere, space, and sun, and applies this knowledge to science and service that touch the lives of all Americans.

NOAA warns of dangerous weather, charts our seas and skies, guides our use and protection of ocean and coastal resources, and conducts research to improve our understanding and stewardship of the environment which sustains us all.

A Commerce Department agency, NOAA provides these services through five major organizations: the National Weather Service, the National Ocean Service, the National Marine Fisheries Service, the National Environmental Satellite, Data and Information Service, and Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research; and numerous special program units. In addition, NOAA research and operational activities are supported by the Nation's seventh uniformed service, the NOAA Corps, a commissioned officer corps of men and women who operate NOAA ships and aircraft, and serve in scientific and administrative posts.

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NOAA's role in the Clean Water Action Plan

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is a member of the Federal Steering Committee that is guiding federal implementation of the plan. NOAA is partnering with other federal, state, and local agencies to improve the monitoring of coastal waters, expand research of emerging problems like *Pfiesteria*, amend Fishery Management Plans to protect essential fish habitats, and ensure the implementation of strong state programs to reduce polluted runoff to coastal waters.

NOAA is the lead agency for the following twelve key actions stated in the plan.

- ☑ Report on the status of shellfish bed conditions (Action Item #9)
- ☑ Increase the acreage of wetlands restored annually, by 2005 (Action Item #42)
- ☑ Issue technical guidance on the restoration, creation, and enhancement of wetland functions (Action Item #46)
- ☑ Develop a coordinated response system that supports state and local efforts in coastal waters for major events, such as harmful algal blooms and *Pfiesteria* outbreaks (Action Item #51)
- ☑ Support the efforts of coastal states to reduce polluted runoff that may contribute to local and regional *Pfiesteria* problems (Action Item #52)

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- ☑ Implement the current National Harmful Algal Bloom Research and Monitoring Strategy (Action Item #53)
- ☑ Amend Fisheries Management Plans, including the identification of essential fish habitat (Action Item #54)
- ☑ Develop programs to reduce polluted runoff in coastal areas (Action Item #56)
- ☑ Further develop partnerships with state, tribal, and local governments and organizations to provide information to local decision makers in coastal areas (Action Item #57)
- ☑ Use the International Year of the Ocean, to educate citizens, landowners, and consumers across the nation about their reliance and impacts on coastal waters (Action Item #58)
- ☑ Develop a multi-agency Coastal Research Strategy (Action Item #59)
- ☑ Develop a plan for coordinated monitoring of coastal waters and develop a comprehensive report to the public on the condition of the nation's coastal waters (Action Item #60)

NOAA's Clean Water Action Plan Accomplishments

Preventing Harmful Algal Blooms

NOAA is working with federal and state partners to finalize the draft contingency plan for Harmful Algal Blooms, which will allow federal agencies to provide prompt and coordinated assistance to states to help them respond to outbreaks of harmful algal blooms, such as *Pfiesteria*. Under the Plan, federal agencies will

assist states to perform rapid scientific assessments in order to minimize harm from outbreaks, as well as to capture critical measurements that are necessary to conduct research on the toxicity of the organisms and the causes of the outbreaks.

Developing and Implementing Coastal Nonpoint Pollution Programs

NOAA and EPA completed the review and conditional approval of all 29 state Coastal Nonpoint Pollution Control Programs on schedule (by June 30, 1998). These programs will provide a road map for coastal states to follow in controlling polluted runoff into coastal waters.

Reporting on the Condition of the Nation's Shellfish Beds

NOAA completed a report and CD-ROM documenting the status of shellfish bed conditions nationally. The report characterizes the status of over 4,200 shellfish-growing waters in 21 coastal states, as well as the status of shellfish restoration efforts. The report provides an important indicator of the health of the Nation's estuarine and coastal waters, and provides decision-makers with insights into the effectiveness of pollution control programs.

Future NOAA Project and Goals

NOAA is requesting full funding of \$22 million for its Clean Water Initiative programs in FY 2000. This will allow NOAA to continue its harmful algal bloom and hypoxia research and monitoring activities, to support new state Coastal Programs in developing coastal nonpoint pollution control programs and to provide technical support to all coastal states to implement their coastal nonpoint programs, and to continue to address the impacts of hazardous wastes on coastal water quality and NOAA trust resources. ☑

For more information please visit our Web site at <http://www.cleanwater.gov>

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